YEAR IN YOU'RE OUT

SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN

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NEW YORK
HORACE LIVERIGHT

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SAMUEL HOFFENSTEIN

MANUFACTURED IN THE U. S. A.

To those, who month on weary month,
Heard me proclaiming more than one-th
The nine varieties of woe
(Oh, more!) designed for us below;
Who listened, looked and answered, "No";
To Edith, Sally, Marty, Kay;
To Boardman ("Mike"), T.R. and Gay,
Who listened, looked, and said, "Go rhyme!"
This book —
Tomorrow is a tougher time.

Some of these verses were previously printed in *Harper's Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, *The American Mercury*, the *D.A.C. News*, *Vanity Fair*, and the New York *Tribune*.

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INVOCATION

Invocation

Come, lovely Muse, desert for me
Your leafy hill, your crystal spring,
Your Heliconian company
Who taught the earlier Greek to sing.

Your laurel and your lute forsake,
Your parsley-field and pleasant wood,
Your votive rose, suburban brake
And all its antic brotherhood.

Abandon to their goats and sheep
The herdsmen in their whispering home,
Where Pindar woke from sunny sleep
To smack Boeotian honeycomb.

Your myrtle and your April loves,
Your amber days, whose temperate sun,
Wind-winnowed in the ordered groves,
Is to your body subtly spun;

Your lunar mead, your starry glade,
Your fragrant and nectarean night,
Your bird liquescent in the shade
That melts melodiously to light;

Your sail beyond the morning sands,
Where Sappho, wandering from the sea,
To Phaon stretches fluid hands,
Come, leave, oh, Muse, and live with me!

Come, live with me and we shall make
Delicious and immortal moan,
And the fantastic bootleg shake
Unto the ductile saxophone.

Come, live with me and be my love
In statutory Christian sin,
And we shall all the pleasures prove
Of two-room flats and moral gin.

And you shall be a modern maid,
And golf upon the Attic greens,
Bisexually unafraid,
And talk about your endocrines.

And we shall to the heavens advance,
And broadcast to the quaking dawn
The age that walks in Puritan pants
With just one crucial button gone.

And we shall sing of export trade,
And celebrate the fiscal year,
And revel in the basement shade
Until the lusty riveteer,

Winds high and clear his rural horn
And the official day begins,
And we shall usher in the morn
With bowls of shredded vitamins.

Oh, come, sweet Muse, and share with me
My kitchenette and telephone,
And all my complexes shall be
Your true and circumambient own.

And we shall pluck the dulcet strain
From ukulele and guitar,
And look on Ford and Hoover plain,
And meet the cousins of the Czar:

The countless cousins of the Czar,
Grand Duke or Duchess, every one,
As multitudinous as are
The spheres (who borrow from the sun).

And we shall tune the choriamb,
And with the taxi-horn compete,
To bull and bear and little lamb
Who play together in the Street.

And airships overhead shall roar
The hymnal of our happy state,
Based on the single standard, or
If you prefer, companionate.

And Progress shall with every flower
Of sweet Expense her ardor prove,
If you will leave your dated bower,
Delightful Muse, and be my love.

LYRIC, TO BE SKIPPED BY THOSE WHO DO NOT CARE FOR THIS SORT OF THING

Lyric, to be Skipped by Those Who Do Not Care for This Sort of Thing

We have starved on bread and meat,
Thirsted long on bitter wine;
Let us now the locusts eat
And suck the wind for sprays of brine.

Birds will wing from west and east,
Stars fly low from north and south,
Beasts approach to share our feast,
Sands grow fertile with our drouth.

In the desert let us be
Baptists of the single thought,
Till the solitude and we
The final ecstasy have wrought.

He, who drank the vinegar,
Took the thundercloud for bread,
Saw, at last, the evening star
Brighten with the risen dead.

COME WEAL, COME WOE, MY STATUS IS QUO

Come Weal, Come Woe, My Status is Quo

I

Inventory

The tallest buildings ever known,
The radio and the vitaphone,
Unfortunately, do not affect
My status in the least respect.

The flights across the wet Atlantic,
However curious, bold and antic,
Unfortunately, do not affect
My status in the least respect.

The consultations of physicians
About my various weird conditions,
Unfortunately, did not affect
My status in the least respect.

A green and prophylactic diet,
Fresh air and exercise and quiet,
Unfortunately, do not affect
God's malice in the least respect.

Parliaments and Presidents,
The fiscal year's combined events,
Unfortunately, do not affect
My status in the least respect.

But Eve's experiments with alien pleasures,
And ignorance of safe and simple measures,
Unfortunately, still affect
My earthly status in every respect.

A Spirit risen from her Hour of Bliss,
That hounded Cain and Abel through Genesis,
Unfortunately, still affects
My earthly status in all respects.

And the unsleeping dead, who range
Tissues and cells and brain and blood,
Unalterable foes of Change,
And friends of the primordial mud,
Unfortunately, still affect
My earthly status in every respect.

II

Now I see clearly as they are
Sun and moon and sea and star,

Grass and tree and all my kind
Without distortion of my mind.
Time has quieted my rage
And freed my thought of peonage.
No more I serve with singing fire
The lying altars of desire,
Or dream the things of air and sod
A falcon on the wrist of God.
Two and two are merely four
And often less and never more,
And I, for all the world's advance,
An upright mammal wearing pants.
Let poets more romantic sing
The *double entendre* of the spring,
The flower of faith, the core of love—
I know the algebra thereof.
I weigh the facts and note the dross
And am, in short, a total loss!

III

How sweet upon the silent night
To meditate the hours in flight;
To dream upon the awful Plan
That wrought bacilli, beast and man:
To ponder the design above
That fashioned locusts, llamas, love,
The ocean's broad and iron track,
The zebra and the zodiac!

When I consider all that is,
I feel the wonder on my phiz;—
I feel my startled hair stand up
At thought of bee and buttercup,
The cow and her mechanic cud,
The circulation of the blood,
The senses, seasons, night and noon,
Zulus, women and the moon. . . .
Yet, swiftly as the minutes flit,
I realize I'm used to it!

IV

For hours and hours I could not sleep:
I counted horses, goats and sheep;
I heard the clock strike four and five,
And counted every beast alive—
Zebus, emus, yaks and gnus,
Enough for seventy-seven zoos;
Lions, tigers, droves and herds;
Serpents, insects, fishes, birds;—
A zoological survey
I made before the break of day,
And when there wasn't another sheep
Or bug to count, I fell asleep.

V

I've had troubles all my life:
Now 'twas storm and now 'twas strife;

Yet at honest trades I worked
Year in, you're out, and never shirked;
Then I married, settled down,
And kept on settling round the town—
(For, as you know, the life domestic
Is not always of the best-ic).
Did I grumble? Yes, I did,
But never had a thought to skid;—
"Honest toil," was still my motto,
"Is the way to get your auto"—
Though I knew that I could land it
As a bootlegger or bandit.
Well, some day, I'll have my fill:
The worm will turn—*but I'll lie still.*

VI

When I consider how we fret
About a woman or a debt,
And strive and strain and cark and cuss,
And work and want and sweat and fuss,
And then observe the monkey swing
A casual tail at everything,
I am inclined to think that he
Evolved from apes like you and me.

VII

The grass, it does not meditate
Upon its fairly low estate,

Or tell the laden wind that blows
Its envy of the richer rose.
When sun and drouth, that spare the oak,
Conspire to leave it flat and broke,
It does not hate the noble tree
For its impregnability,
Or worry how to borrow rain
From balmy Sicily or Spain.
It lets these trifles come to pass,
And just continues to be grass.
I wish, with just as little trouble,
I came to my eventual stubble!

VIII

Tempora Mutantur

Before Sir Isaac Newton sent
The Serpent back a riper apple;
Before Professor Einstein bent
The cosmos in a single grapple;

Before Marconi flung an S
Across the orthodox Atlantic,
And Freud confirmed our private guess
That sex was capriped and antic;

Before the Brothers Wright prevailed
On ether to endure the human;
Before the modest darkness paled,
When Man decided to illumine;

Before the very word Pasteur
Struck terror to the brute bacillus,
And Ehrlich left poor Venus poor,
With not a decent way to kill us;—

A man was born (as he is now—
The method shows no sign of failing).
He suffered from his fellows. (How?
Vide the manner still prevailing.)

He lost his teeth (as we do now,
For all Sangredo's dental capers),
And skilful fingers milked the cow;—
(*The others? Read the daily papers.*)

He groaned (like us) in care and debt—
Consult the archives of the breezes—
He earned his taxes in his sweat
And died (as we do) of diseases.

He dreamed in air and strove in dust
And bled for priests and politicians;
He learned to place his final trust
(Compare our own!) in the morticians.

He served a million gods (*what news!*)
With first his crimes and then his chorals;
He stole (*aha!*) his neighbor's shoes
And paid him back a set of morals.

In short, while scientists unborn
Prepare to search the stars and roses,
The snail is on his ancient thorn
And God in conference with Moses.

IX

Dear God, or Allah, Buddha, Christ,
Osiris, Zeus, or what You will,
Lord of impenetrable mist
And (what a range!) the daffodil—
Let not Your servant (me, of course)
Who, much as any man, admires
Your very tiniest *tour de force*,
Despise so much what he desires!

Let him (I pray You) either want
Completely, or be quite exempt;
Let him (a trifling boon) not haunt
The loud bazaars of his contempt,
Eventually there to find
The immemorial, dusty prizes,
And then, with a tormented mind,
Desire so much what he despises!

Grant me, I beg, if You have time,
A modest increment (unearned),
A fringe of unlaborious rhyme,
And leagues of sleep (my candle's burned);
A ton of *Sitzfleisch* for my mind,

Which noble longing often irks,
And for my solemn soul, the kind
Of grin that overspreads Your works.

Let me, in short, on Your estate
With You serenely rusticate!

THE STRICKEN

The Stricken

Here in the static dark we lie,
My love, Insomnia, and I,
And hear (oh, Lord, again?) again
The brittle swish of blind rain
Groping with a mendicant sound
For the almshouse of the ground.

Here on the stony hour I lie
Rolling darkness from my eye
And stare like an unmoving sheep
At the pasture-line of sleep.

Oh, how the day's phenomena
Perplex my brain and viscera!
Ring, solemn dirge, in dour steeple,
Ring out Jehovah's dreadful terms!
The world is full of things and people;
The grave of worms.
Woe, woe, woe, woe!

And there's no other place to go.
Ring, ring, sour steeple!
Heaven is also full of people,
And hell is less a dire damnation
Than a literal translation.

On this brazier shall we heat
Our unreal and unutterable sweet?
On this clear and singing stream
Shall we drift into the dream?
We, who wonder
At the bottom of what water
Lies the stone of the dead thunder
And the wrack's wild daughter.

In the wood whose boles are blue
And high as the liquescent spheres,
That drench him with their fiery dew,
The immortal unicorn keeps tryst
With our far and faithless spears.
On this chariot shall we ride
To the passion in his side?
And how shall we be going soon?

In the dark chamber of the moon
Sits the Eternal Onanist,
Whose insane visions circle round
The breasts of the lascivious ground.
It is thus
Gnomic spirits enter us;

Salamanders burn our flesh;
Sylphs our simple wills enmesh;
Undines beat in us like waves
Crying for their phosphor-caves.
It is for this twisted birth
That we pay with death and fire;
Bodies to the bawdy earth,
Madness to our nubile Sire!

We are the toad's imagined spirit;
We are the tree-roots' animate fingers
Groping for the pitiful head
Of their particular dead;
The light that lingers
When the light is fled.
We are the sea-foam's birth-in-death;
We are the corpse's after-breath.
We are the ultra-violet
Of an anticipated regret.
We cannot see for seeing,
Or be, who are half-clothed in being.
We are the homesick
Born in the burning
Of our home.
Our root is a yearning,
Our roof is the gloam.
By back-stairs and by fire-escapes
We sneak to our enchanted shapes
Through nocturnes of the half-born, where
They moan between earth's loins and air.

We must die and die again
And eat the fire-hot heart of pain
To take our strange and baffled ease
In the apocalyptic land.

For there the candelabra stand
Whose flames are cold and white as snow,
And no shadow of them falls
On the penetrable walls
And the tall hush of tapestries.
We must go
From room to room and room to room
And pay especial tithes to Doom,
Ever, ever in arrears;
For we have broken and break the law;
We have opened the lion's jaw
And pitied the imprisoned years.

His head upon his fumbling paw,
We have seen the tiger's tears.

COUPLETS, RARE, MEDIUM, AND WELL-DONE

Couplets, Rare, Medium, and Well-Done

I

The Ovum

The tiny ovum does not know
Its own capacity for woe.

Oh, nor in bitterness nor in hate
Blame it for its developed state!

It prayed no aching prayer to be
The Son of God, or you or me.

Its hairless hide had little room
For fleas like *cogito* or *sum*.

Lay not to it your daily hurt:
Love came and did the creature dirt.

Who would have thought so small a chalice
Could interest His mighty malice?

It had no thought to injure us
When it beheld homunculus.

It fell, as women often do,
With never a thought of me or you.

And now, alas, it cannot quit
Unless you disensorcel it.

Oh, give the wretched creature gas
And it will gladly go to grass!

Oh, hang yourself and let it be
As innocent again and free!

One slip for love was never meant
To bring such dreadful punishment.

II

Man

The ways of other creatures seem
Ridiculous in the extreme.

The monk's behavior with his tail
Is something quite beyond the pale.

The camel chews a silly cud;
The hippo bathes in tropic mud.

The serpent never can resist
The tricks of the contortionist.

The whale, for all his glory, blows
Excessive water through his nose.

The idiotic fly will crawl
Along a ceiling or a wall.

But Man, who takes a higher track,
Is merely egomaniac.

III

The Sexes

The sexes aren't very nice:
They are but instruments of vice.

If the obscure amoeba can
Get on without them, so should Man.

The dwellers in the pure serene
Are scrupulously epicene.

They play a little music, yes,
But merely out of blessedness.

Of course the Latin peoples are
Morally crepuscular.

But the Nordic will inherit
Heaven and earth for special merit.

A race so nobly destined ought
To propagate by power of thought—

Which the exalted Nordic can
More nearly do than any man.

For nothing is, as well you know,
But constant thinking makes it so.

IV

Spiritual Revised

Swoop low, sweet Spirit of St. Lou,
And lift me up into the blue.

Up through the cerulean floor
We'll float as through a cellar-door,

While envious rivals, hissing anger,
Glare upon our empty hangar.

God's natural gases will distil
Themselves our thirsty tanks to fill.

Into His pure domain we'll burst
Beatified, but also first.

The aviators of the Lord
Will lead us to our bright award.

And there, before the Throne, we'll make
A perfect landing for His sake.

And while the apocalyptic beast
Yields us his honors at the feast,

The *Times*, in an exclusive story,
Will print the record of our glory.

V

The Parrot

The parrot imitates the man
As nimbly as a parrot can.

He spreads his pinions green and red,
And trumpets for unleavened bread.

He doesn't worry, sweat or cuss
Because he's not mellifluous.

He doesn't care for music's laws—
A parrot simply caws be-cause.

A parrot caws the way he can,
Nor cares a caw for beast or man.

He lets his larynx take its course,
Although 'tis less a bird than hoarse.

Ah, I would give my absent pence
To have that bird's indifference!

'TIS I, SIR, RHYMING RAPIDLY

'Tis I, Sir, Rhyming Rapidly

He who has not suffered away
The small perspective of the clay,
Or learned to hang his bleeding heart,
His trivial or heroic part,
His pain, his failure, or his might
Upon horizons infinite,
Shall chew the cud of every grief,
And all that will be, is, or was,
Shall dwindle to the bitter leaf,
The acrid herb, the nettled grass.

The marrow of his bones shall be
The savor of eternity,
And the gross fluid of his eye
Shall darken and confine his sky.
His year shall wither in a rose;
The mountain frustrate his desire,
And all the planetary woes
Circle his brain with lurid fire.

But he who dangles from his wrist
The rusty trinket of his life;
Whose mind is like a river-bed
Whereon the stream of peace and strife
Flows to the ocean of the dead,
Shall be the crowd, the Cross, the Christ.
His silent eye shall look afar
And see and also be the star.
Like earth, he shall possess the yield,
And be the walker and the field,
And pass his sorrows in the air,
And see his own joys flying there,
And beat, through every mortal part,
Harmonious with the central heart.

But who would be so richly poor,
And leave his brain's queer furniture
And the warm kitchen of his heart,
Naked and lone to go apart,
For the high mountain's wintry drouth,
And planets perching on his mouth,
And death juvescent in his veins,
And life, a sparrow in his bones,
Dropping his losses and his gains
Upon the pit's imagined stones?
Who would divorce the blood to lie
With pale peace illicitly,
Or only glacial silence hear
Instead of love and joy and fear

And hate and care and glassy dream,
To be the sparkle on a stream,
Or master of a nameless God,
Like flies and rocks and goldenrod,
Or the volcanic sundowns red,
Or the disentangled dead?
And who would see his skeleton
Dangle from moon and star and sun
In puppet rages, while he heard
The sheathèd sword, which is the Word,
Gnaw at its scabbard like a mouse,
And his own mind the empty house?

Drown in the howling autumn sea
Your serpent-cold philosophy,
And sing to the tormented blind
Desire in a corporeal wind,
And sing to the tormented sight
The convolutions of the light,
The tentacles of light, that seize
The unresisting void and mould
The vast bisexual hierarchies,
Whose aeons are sublunar gold,
Whose teeth and stomachs grow not old,
Who strum their platinum guitars,
And ride their comet motor-cars,
And tread both roses and the stars!
Sing of the blue, celestial buttes,
Which, desperate faith at first forecasting,
A special liturgy transmutes

Into Suburbia everlasting!
Sing of immortal life-extension,
Whose procreant tide engulfs the skies,
And add a mystic fourth dimension,
But merely as a compromise!
For what poor, mortal wretch would be
Healed of his hurt, except as he,
Or render the capacious dust,
With all his repetitious troubles,
Divine protraction of his lust
And heavenly blowing of his bubbles?
Pluck then, from your minor air
The worm that cancels every debt,
The root that strangles every care,
The wisdom that observes the fret
And fear and labor all around,
Like things that crawl upon the ground,
And blow upon your saxophone
A gusty and hilarious tone
Of golden ages, just ahead,
For Man evolved, and further on,
The loud and liquidated dead
Scrambling for vantage in the dawn:
The anteroom of heaven here
For the crowding, swindling rear;
The van upon the distant shore
Sweating, cheating evermore.

WELL, LET'S INCLUDE THEM, ANYHOW

Well, Let's Include Them, Anyhow

I

You're a good boy; you mind your mother,
Your father, teacher, baby brother;
You put your pennies in the bankie,
And wipe your nosie on a hankie.
You don't go fighting, stealing, swearing—
You help your mother chop the herring.
Well, you grow up, and you continue
To show the kind of stuff that's in you:
You do not steal the boss's nickels;
You live on sour cream and pickles;
You take what comes and don't get sore yet,
Or ruin ruined women more yet—
And what thanks do you get for it? Can't you
see yet?
Assassin, crook, you're asking *me* yet?

II

You go to bed; you can't sleep yet;
You decide to count a couple of sheep yet;
Well, you count ten; you count twenty;
You count more, you count plenty.
You find more sheep than you expected,
But there isn't one that you've neglected.
You waited while they stopped to browse yet;
You even counted stray cows yet;
You threw in lambs, you threw in rabbits;
You threw in goats with nervous habits.
Your head aches; your ears are humming—
And what thanks do you get? The sheep keep
coming!

III

You've had your share of care and trouble,
Of debt and fret and sweat and stubble;
You've thought of death without a quiver
And tried to find a decent river.
You've drunk, let's say, the bitter cup yet,
But you've kept your chin and courage up yet;
You've carried on; the worst seems over;
You shout for joy, "Aha, clover!"
You see at last an honest measure
Of steaks and chops and sleep and pleasure—
And what do you get? Another clout yet—
You have to have your tonsils out yet!

IV

You have a girl, a real beauty,
A blend of housewife, pal and cutie;
A heaven, a hill, a star to fly to;
Your heart leaps, and *you* try to.
You go here, you go there yet—
With her you haven't a single care yet;
You dream this, you dream that yet,
You sit dreaming and get fat yet.
You call her "Tootsie," "Teeny-weeny,"
And feel at once like Mussolini.
No other man can make her budge yet;
She loves you too (or so you judge yet).
You know now why your life miscarried—
And what do you get? You get married!

V

You have a date to meet your sweetie;
You want to look so nice and neatie;
You want to cut a little dash yet,
And wish you had a waxed mustache yet.
Well, you start to shave and go on shaving
As if you had some inner craving;
You scrape away with classic valor
Till you get a positive prison pallor—
And what thanks do you get? Do you hear her
rave yet?
She looks, and says you need a shave yet!

ODE, ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE WORLD

Ode, on the Construction of the Tallest Building in the World

Lying awake and pondering the rent,
Hearing the jolly stars chant, "Six and eight
per cent"
In all their up-to-date, melodious rings,
Through which a ticker sings,
Behold, I saw the Chrysler Building rise,
Most noble phallus that has yet essayed the skies,
And was content
With this, Man's last, supreme accomplishment.

Still pondering the rent, I sang for joy,
(Unmanly ways of the non-Nordic boy!)
To think that Chrysler had seduced the sky
And that we all should profit gloriously thereby;
That he had conquered with insistent stone
The shy, reluctant, virginal Unknown,
Who had rebuffed with antique chastity

Plato and Shakespeare, Beethoven and me,
And that we all should profit gloriously
thereby!—
For who so mean he would not share
An empire vaster than sublunar air?
Nobody!—
And so I sang for joy,
(Being, as I said before, no Pilgrim Father's
boy),
Chrysler would pay the rent
Out of the firmament—
The firmament that he had made his own
With one insistent thrust of virile stone—
Chrysler would surely pay the rent.
And I was quite content.

For now what need we further seek?
This is the world's peak;
This is the hilltop of the human climb;
This is the overtaking of swift Time;
This is the Grail, the glory of the quest;
The robe is rent, the Mystery possessed.
For has not Chrysler ravished the Unknown
With one deliberate thrust of phallic stone,
And made himself Jehovah's son-in-law?
Behold a common man has risen to this state,
The husband of the Sphinx and sovereign of
Fate,
And sits beside Himself, as ringed with awe;
Has entered where poor Einstein could but peer!

Will he desert us now,
With seven concentric haloes on his brow,
The bridegroom of the once inviolable Bride?
Are we not with him risen
Out of this earthly prison;
Are we not sharers too of his divinity,
Who with a single thrust
Beatified his own and all our dust?
What is there more to suffer and to fear?
The Sphinx is riddled by a mortal man;
The frigid secret is possessed at last;
The door is closed on Man's concluded Past;
The hilly ages now are trodden down;
Chrysler has set the Apocalyptic crown
Upon the head of our tormented clan—
This Bridegroom of the once inviolable Bride,
So long aloof and now so gratified—
Never wore she with greater grace
The meditative night upon her face—
What if the Bank of Manhattan could but fail?
Hail, Chrysler, resolute, potent lover, hail!
Through you the torrent of our woe is spent.
Chrysler will pay the rent
Out of his portion of the firmament.
What even matters the rent?
Are we not now ascended from the sod
To be, through Chrysler, in-laws, yea, of God?
And so I lay content,
The struggle done,
The glory won.

The night waxed, then waned, like a high
revelry.
The flaming Chryslers in the sky grew dim,
Which he had given to all the cherubim,
Who raced like children in them through the
night,
To Chrysler's and his Bride's and Father-in-law's
delight.
The dawn, new-washed for the festivity,
Moved like a bridesmaid in her hyacinthine
white.
Followed the golden pages of the morn.
For once I rose and was not all forlorn.
Chrysler, I thought, will surely phone or write,
Or radio from the conquered skies
My personal share in this new paradise.
Chrysler will pay the rent.
In this new state of man there is no rent.
And so I was content.

Sounded the anvils of the metropolitan day.
Familiarly the hours roared away,
And in my diaphragm the old dismay
Began to sing God's mercies once again.
Has Chrysler thrust in vain?
Where is Chrysler, where is he,
That he has neither phoned nor radio'd me?
Has he ascended into Heaven alone?
And then I saw the mighty phallus rise
Firm against the somewhat drooping skies

And mirth succeeded moan.
This is no triumph one may make his own.
This is no individual ravishment.
This is the *world's* tallest building—no?
So!
This is the grand Apocalypse, foretold
In topaz, ruby, chalcedony, gold.
And so I am content,
And neither struggle, fret, nor pay the rent.
In fact, there is no rent.

SERENADES AND SONGS FOR A PENT-HOUSE WINDOW

Serenades and Songs for a Pent-House Window

I

Sometimes, since you must absent be,
I wish that Love would set me free;
I want to see you with my eyes;
I want to hold you with my hands,
But Thought itself too sorely tries
The heart with gossamer contrabands:—
You are far more than wandering air,
And nearer than the arrogant stars,
And no fair things are yet so fair
That they may be your avatars.
Come back, or let these others be;
Your shadows cannot comfort me:
You are the certain knife, not they,
To whittle my foolish life away!

II

Darling, you have lived and loved
And your capacious nature proved;
Now promise that the residue
To me will evermore be true!

Though you have been of much bereft,
Oh, give me, give me what is left,
And let me ever, ever be
The keeper of the moiety!

Oh, promise, promise to be true!—
I love the fraction that is you;
And let, past all subtraction, me
Your final numerator be!

III

The interfering stars above
Decree that we must part,
So, fare you well, my loveliest love,
With, I suppose, my heart.

And I shall grieve for you, my sweet—
For who is truly wise?—
Though all the sour facts repeat
That blessings love disguise.

Oh, other joys, they say, abound
In thoughtful Man's estate,
But Love still makes the world go round
That else were going straight.

IV

Stand not too near me,
Lest in time arise
A need of the nearness
Of your hands and eyes;

Of the words of your mouth,
Of your care, your caress,
Of the staff and the scrip
Of your tenderness.

When the great, central cloud
That domes the doomed world
Is rent like a tent-cloth,
And the storm-spears are hurled—

The lightnings of sorrow,
The wild arrows of pain—
Let me not need your nearness,
Lest I need in vain.

Let me stand lonely
By the dark, still deep,
Lest I call you, only,
Only to weep.

My own is my pain,
My own is my fear;
Frail are we to sustain:
Stand not too near.

V

If the truth were not so hard,
You might say this thing to me,
That you made me shard by shard
Out of ruins tremblingly—

Out of fragments that remained
In your heart of other days;
Out of knowledge that you gained
When you walked on sweeter ways.

I am what the rest were not;
I am not myself at all;
I am something you have wrought
Like a vase upon the wall.

Well, I'll never be on guard,
And I'll safely play the game,
Lest I crumble shard by shard
And you cry some dearer name.

VI

Ah, the house that we shall build
In our love's fair weather!

Ah, the many fields untilled
We shall till together!

We shall build and till and reap,
Singing in all weather;
Then, at last, we'll go to sleep,
Possibly, together.

VII

Your hair is so golden;
Your hair is my joy,
Like Helen's in olden
High splendor of Troy.

I wonder how true are
Such portents; I—well,
I wonder if you are
As fickle as Hel—!

VIII

How long, how long, are the days without you!
How lone the light, how far the faces!
You have gathered the quickness of earth about
you
And left a death upon people and places.

As in a dream I walk, I wander,
Seeing your face in all the faces,
Until in my arms we kiss and ponder
A happy choice of people and places.

IX

I love my love
That she is woman;
I fear my love
That she is human.

Ah, were she woman
One shade less,
She would not so
My heart oppress;

But were she free
Of any fault,
She would not so
My heart exalt.

X

You love me and I love you,
Yet one and one make always two.
How bright the light from every sun,
If one and one made ever one!

XI

Please remember that you are,
Though we never meet again,
Compounded of a song and star
And a madness in my brain.

XII

Oh, had you but tarried!
Oh, had you but waited!
Oh, had we not married!—
Although it was fated!—

What dreams in our bosom
Now might we not carry
Of sunshine and blossom
When we two should marry!

XIII

Loving me, be not too faint
To observe and bear in mind
Every reason for complaint:
Be not to my faults too blind;

So that, when you prepare to go,
You can say with righteous pride:
"You did so-and-so-and-so,"
And be sweetly justified.

XIV

Love, a little of myself
I'll keep: you have enough of pelf;
You will not grudge my heart the pence
It saves against your going hence.

When next autumn's leaves are shed,
My soul shall need both meat and bread;
You will have much richer loot,
And I shall not go destitute.

METAPHYSICAL

Metaphysical

The Lord is in the sea and sky;
The Lord is in the rose and root;
The Lord is in my shirt and tie,
My dentist and my either boot;
The Lord is in the earth and air—
In short the Lord is everywhere.

For if He were not everywhere,
He could not then look out for us,
And if He were not everywhere,
He would not be ubiquitous,
And that—but then you know as well
As I, that is unthinka-bel.

And since He is ubiquitous,
The Lord is in my creditors;
And since He is ubiquitous,
The Lord is in those editors

Who tell me it is blasphemous
To sing Him so ubiquitous.

He is the germ ubiquitous,
The cures and the preventatives,
The preacher and the 'potamus,
The House of Representatives,
And that—but then you know as well
As I—that is unthinka-bel.

If He were not ubiquitous,
He could not then look out for us,
But if He is, He'd have to be
In you, of course, and even me,
And that is so preposterous
It verges on the blasphemous.

Consider the dilemma He
Provides for His apologist!
For which the only remedy
Is here appended, I insist:
There's so much wrong with everything,
The Lord has quit ubiquit-ing!

OUT OF THE EVERYWHERE INTO THE HERE

Out of the Everywhere into the Here

I

The ocean spills upon the sands
Water with a thousand hands,
And when the water all is spilled,
The sands are dry, the ocean filled.

II

Aubade: New York

Now Morning, blue and golden, falls
On Bloch and Finkel Overalls;
Incarnadines with bold advance
The front of Blaustein's Kiddie Pants,
And stoops to sample with a kiss
The truth of Cleanso Dentifrice.

Then, tripping smartly on her way
In crêpe that rustles Paul Poiret,
Her lovely mouth all redolent
Of Listerine and Pepsodent,
Her hair in wavelets that evince
The art of Louis, Cat and Quince,
At last her Onyx footfalls come
To Lucky Strike and Wrigley's gum,
Where pausing, half prepared to swoon,
She wishes it were never noon.

Sweet Morning, ere you yield the boon
Of heaven to the afternoon,
Oh, let me envy from the ground
The sights of your celestial round!
How pleasant from your height of East
Your eyes on such delight to feast;
To learn that Lifebuoy floats and laves;
That Kelly Tires while Pluto saves;
That tubes of Forhan's hourly strive
To add four more and make it five;
That beards are never what they seem
To hopeful Colgate's Shaving Cream;
That men will gladly suffer much
And more, for Skins They Love to Touch;
That Zoolac is no vulgar milk;
That Moon-Glo has become a silk;
That Gloria Swanson, shining far,
Is still your sister, and a star!

Sweet Morning, wandering in Thibet,
Can you forget, can you forget?
Do you, unmindful, never stop
To weep regret for Autostrop,
Or seek among some crag of Alp
Ed. Pinaud in a tourist-scalp?
Or when your orient sandals brave
The Cashmere wild, the Caspian wave,
Do you not yearn to lay your heart
On Roxy's Synagogue of Art?
Where, by the lone and febrile Nile,
Do jolly natives walk a mile
Through sands more dread than northern mud
To see the Camel chew his cud,
Or where dare palm and olive hope
To mate and conquer while there's soap?

Dear Morning, in our western night,
I see your golden car alight
On a pagoda-roof, below
The cherry's fragrant spring of snow,
Because Uneeda Biscuit so,
And thus refreshed, dream longingly
Of that tall city by the sea
Where sons of Halitosis fight
The spectral battle day and night,
And having struggled, having won,
Climb to their places in the sun.

III

Like lidless eyes, the windows stare
On people, street and empty air;
On happiness and misery,
They seem to gaze impartially;
And yet, I cannot help but think
That sometimes they would like to wink,
Or shut their lids at all they see
Of folly and of vanity.
To stare at all the suns and rains
And men, should give them window-panes.

IV

The backs of houses in the rain
Are sad as dreams one dreams in vain;
Are sad as memories that waken
Thoughts of the lovely road not taken.
So drooping-still, so lone are they,
So melancholy and so gray,
It seems such selfishness and sin
Not to take the poor things in,
And let them look, at any rate,
On the small solace of a grate.
But then, the downcast are such bores,
They don't deserve a place indoors.
Who are as futile as a mouse is,
Deserve to be just backs of houses.

V

Lamplight, through a leafy lace
Of trees, has a surprising grace:
The family in evening ease
I picture through the tinted trees;
The father with his sheaf of papers,
The children with their pretty capers,
And mother, fresh and sane as wheat,
Sewing with fingers love makes fleet.
How such a scene would taunt the devil,
If it were only on the level!

VI

Cross-legged where the lamplight gleams
A bronze and silent Buddha dreams,
With placid and metallic pity
For all the turmoil of the city,
As if, although his eyes are blind,
He saw the stress of humankind.
I gaze at him and wish that he
Would lend me his serenity—
That imperturbable repose
'Round which the sea of Gotham flows
And breaks like water on a rock;
The bronze victorious in the shock.
But sometimes, when in merry fettle,
I'd rather suffer than be metal.

VII

Sheep

Nibble, nibble, little sheep,
In the meadow, on the steep;
Keep your nozzle in the grass
And let the Kingdom come to pass.

All the money in the mint,
All the news that's fit to print
Is but grass upon the steep
For another kind of sheep.

You have ticks and fleas, I know;
They have *sum* and *cogito;*
You are prey to simple bites;
They have transatlantic flights.

Happy, happy, little sheep,
You have but to eat and sleep;
Even when you ruminate
Saint Peter dozes by the gate.

They have radio, submarines,
Complexes and endocrines,
Television, taxes, rent,
Faith and hope and six per cent.

You are casual with your kind;
They have organized a mind;

You are mated for a goal;
They have libido and soul.

You are sexed for simple use;
They have let their women loose;
Earth remembers you and yields
Milk of her mammalian fields.

There is but a line between
You and your nutritious green,
But to get their grass they must
Scrabble riddles in the dust;

Scrabble riddles on their brain,
Make a plow of wind and rain,
Bury stars and pile up stone,
Bind their hearts and yoke their own.

When the shearer's work is done
Yours the pasture and the sun;
But for them the unborn years
Are but whetstones for the shears.

You see what your eyes command—
Cloud and clover, lake and land,
But their sight must lag behind
The laboring oxen of the mind.

Nibble, nibble, little sheep,
In the meadow, on the steep;
When the Kingdom comes to pass,
Its tents and trumpets will be grass.

VIII

Cloud

The cloud assumes fantastic shapes
Of beasts and continents and capes;
Of island, mountain, monolith,
And hybrid fauna out of myth.
I've seen the knights of Arthur's court
Themselves among its towers disport;
The silver griffon charge the sun,
And once, a gold Napoleon.

Alas, that hot ambition leaps
The steed that walks, the man who creeps,
And girt for conquest of the sky,
Conspires with creatures born to die!
The turret thins; the dream is done;
A breeze dissolves Napoleon;
The griffon curls his pale remains
Round Arthur's court, while Arthur rains.

Myself have charged the hilly morn
A metaphoric unicorn;
Have hung upon my airy heart
A hybrid bard and Bonaparte;
Have stormed in fabled length and flight
The lunar headlands of delight,
And laid fantastic paws along
The foam-edge of the isles of song.

And yet there died upon the sky
A sun-struck vapor that was I,
And left no mark of myth or man
Or bard or quasi-Corsican.
Desirous cloud, we are too wan
For day or night to build upon,
And all our dream of happiness
Goes up in steam, comes down in less!

IX

Hill

From the grassy path we turn
Through thorny vine and crowded fern,
Through sumach waiting for the brand,
And the green tangle of the land,
Because the hill persuades the eye
With promise of a wider sky.

And then we gain the shallow crest
And take our disappointed rest,
And see with all our aching mind
The brambled wild we left behind,
And search with all the wandering eye
A heaven no bluer, and as high.

Ever before, the earth-strong briar,
The sumach thirsting for the fire,

The unconquered place we struggled through;
Ever behind, a gypsy blue
That leans upon a hill and lies
To the quick heart and gallant eyes.

Ever and evermore, until
The grave arises like a hill
Around us and surmounts desire,
The opposing and sardonic briar,
The hill beyond, the lying crest,
The impassive heaven, the restless rest.

X

A little while to love and rave
And fret and sweat and fear and hope in;
A little while to bathe and shave
And keep the organism open—
Then silence under reeds and roses,
And no more blowing of our noses.

A little while to sweat and bleed
For cheese and biscuits on a table;
A little while to spill our seed
As per directions on the label—
Then dust and wind for saint and sinner,
And no bicarb to praise our dinner.

A little while to give a maid
The things she wants to make her sadder;

A little while to make the grade
Bestrewn with gravel from the bladder—
Then weeds and grass that cows will edit,
And no more cash, and no more credit.

A little while to sleep, or lie
Suspended by some weird psychosis;
To strut, or search the wandering eye
For proof of dreaded halitosis—
Then let the process-servers find us,
Our dental bridges far behind us!

Oh, Lord, who had the right idea
To tame our pride and sex and stomachs;
Who matched our teeth with pyorrhea,
Our tallest towers with graveyard hummocks—
Accept my praises now—I'd rather
Never meet the gifted Author!

XI

I've been in love a dozen times,
And fashioned several thousand rhymes;
For love I've suffered much, indeed,
And rhyming makes my spirit bleed;
And yet, I have unhappy times
When I am out of love and rhymes.

XII

When I had your love, my heart
Was lifted spears and burning banners;
I swaggered through the streets of art
And song, with all a conqueror's manners.

I was the confidant of Fate,
(Who plays such nubile tricks upon us),
I had no envy of the great,
Or malice even for Adonis.

But when I lost your love, I found
My conquest was but breath and bubble;
I walked upon prosaic ground
Whose yield, it seemed, was chiefly stubble.

And then I grieved in purse and pride
That when I was so high and mighty,
I didn't set some store aside
Against the day when you'd be flighty.

XIII

There is no place where I would stray;
There is no place where I would stay;
My soul is dark with stormy riot,
Directly traceable to diet.
I'm sorry that the spirit's treasons
Should spring from such material reasons!

XIV

Sometimes, I think I'd like to be
A student of zoology,
To know the day-dreams of the auk,
And why the balky mule must balk;
To learn what the rhinoceros
And emu have to say to us.
I think I'd like to understand
Why camels love to play in sand,
And why the zebra has to look
Like a picture in a book.
But most of all, I'd like to know
How the human race got so.

XV

I'm sorry for the people pent
In grimy cities, slaves of Rent,
Who need a thousand eyes and feet
To get across a simple street;
Who never see the so-called sky,
And are too tired to live or die.
They're far less fortunate than cows
That peacefully in pastures browse,
And tranquilly the milk-pail fill,
Earning their living standing still.
I wish these people all could go
Where the untrammelled breezes blow,

And lambs and calves and other pups
Nibble at the buttercups.
I wish they all could go away
And watch the stripling fishes play
Where other gods are served than Pelf:
I need the extra room myself.

XVI

Calmly, in the commissary mead
The cows, the calves, the sheep, the lambkins feed;
They nibble as their noses list what chow
The field provides for sheep and lamb and cow;
They turn no sniffing bugles up to say,
"Waiter, what's on the bill-of-fare today?"
Or weigh with worry and unspoken curse
The monstrous price against the puny purse.
The laden landscape offers its cuisine:
They view the prospect and consume the scene.
No hoof to mouth their happy state disturbs;
No minatory tip their pleasure curbs;
What's underfoot is quickly under way,
Without a cover charge, (or cabaret),
Which we, who come to scoff, remain to pay.
Oh, creatures noble in your simple lot,
And even nobler when you go to pot,
These acres of green grass are yours to eat;
Go to it, creatures—it improves the meat!

XVII

When I was young, (or maybe, five),
And glad, so glad to be alive,
Oh, how my fancy used to itch
To be—how shall I put it?—rich!
A millionaire, it seemed to me,
Was quite the only thing to be;
A millionaire or billionaire
Or trillionaire—let's leave it there!
Well, now my jolly youth is dead,
My pretty, infant fancies fled,
And here I sit and brood and itch
To be—how shall I put it?—rich!

XVIII

When all alone at night I lie
And stare upon a square of sky,
A wanderer by the wind-worn deep
Where all must walk who cannot sleep,
Who goes with me along the strand
And holds my limp and fevered hand?
Who stays with me the slow night through,
My lone and loyal retinue,
And guards me till the break of day?
My friend, my pal, Insom-ni-ay!

XIX

When winter's here, my thoughts revert
To the phenomena of dirt;
In short, in fact, or what you will,
I think of meadow, grove and hill;
Of the inevitable rose,
And almost anything that grows:
(I cannot catalogue them all,
Because my store of facts is small).
I also wander, wide and free,
The realm of ornithology,
And fill my dreaming mind with herds,
Or swarms, or droves, or flocks of birds.
In brief, when winter's here, I grow
Bucolic as a garden hoe.
But when the spring begins to lay
Her carpet on the meanest way,
And buds bestar the humid air
Not only here, but everywhere,
And robins leap, and pastures glow,
And so and so and so and so,
My love of Nature, here set down,
Deserts me, and I stick in town;
Which demonstrates that oftentime
(At least for purposes of rhyme),
A wandering bird in No Man's Land
Is worth a spring-full in the hand.

XX

Who stares upon a star too long,
Will see a woman and hear a song,
And when the night of gazing's done,
He'll think he sees her under the sun,
Because his star-struck mind will be
Dazed with the dead night's ecstasy.
The woman will break his heart in two;
The song will eat his brain right through.

XXI

Lovely you seem, and yet I know
My feeble thinking makes it so;
My foolish heart that shuns despair,
Flies to your breast and calls you fair.
I see you clearly as you are,
And have to call you sun and star,
Because I am so dead afraid
Of an even deeper shade.
You know all this, and smile, and love it,
And take absurd advantage of it.
Alas, that the more tender human
Has nothing else to love but woman!

XXII

On the Death of a Distinguished Statesman

He's gone, and all the world weeps by his bier,
According to the press—
(Though I have failed to find a single tear,
Or symptom of distress:—
Therefore, I take this meaning in the rough—
The bier is metaphoric, home-brew stuff).
Well, anyhow, he's dead, the mighty man,
And here we are
A metaphorically mourning clan
Lamenting his extinguished star,
Bowed in the glory of his lasting name.
(Yet Monday follows Sunday just the same!)
Alas, we all must go,
In human destiny:—
Caesar is dead, and oh,
What difference to me?

COMPLEX, WITH VICTIM VICTORIOUS

Complex, with Victim Victorious

I have no homeland;
I have no Saviour;
I live among people
Of different behaviour;
I have no army,
I have no navy
To rattle their victories,
Stand by, and save me.

When I make blunders
Of act or omission,
I have no aegis
Of custom, tradition—
Chiefs or apostles
To ward off the dangers:
When I am strange,
I am strange among strangers.

Oh, to be different
Breeds heartache and trouble!
But he who is strange
Among strangers pays double.
I have no banner
To fly from my passion,
No gentry to set
My caprices in fashion.

For a half-note of music
I stole from the spheres,
I must weep double
The alien's tears;
I must be two times
The stranger, it seems—
Once for my people,
And once for my dreams.

For a petal of beauty
I shook from the tree
Whose leaves are the moonlight,
Whose roots are the sea,
I stand in the thunder-still
Darkness and strip
For death without burial
And love with a whip.

The lover who follows
The feet of the spheres,
Shall wrestle with shadows
And die on their spears;

But woe to him doubly,
And double his loss,
If he have nor an army,
A navy, a Cross!

An army and navy
To fight for the Lord,
And acres and customs
Enriched by the sword—
His music will dwindle,
His petal will die,
And he may not take it
As lightly as I.

THE MOIST LAND

The Moist Land

(Being an account of the flight of Mr. T. S. Eliot from Scotland into Shropshire, from Shropshire into Wales, and thence into the Irish Sea.)

Unum, duo, tres, quattuor, quinque, sex, septem, octo, novem, decem; shema yisrael, adonai alohainu adonai echad; nun Wilhelm, wie geht's in der Schule, ganz gut, papa; ibid, infra dig, anon, sic, anno mirabile.

I. THE DEMOBILIZATION OF THE FLEET

April's very fickle following
March which is very windy, following
February, very sleety, following
December, and so next year is this year
And so forth and so forth and so forth,
Etcetera, und so weiter.

The Archduke in scarlet hunting coat came down to
breakfast
Having slept all night with his hunting-boots under
the sheets
His gun by his side. The steel of the barrel glittered
All night like phosphorescence in the room heavy with
panatellas.
"Officer, which way is uptown, and if so which way is
downtown?
I am a widow woman from Lynn, Massachusetts, and
have never been here before,
Though I have a cousin on the force whose name is
Sweeney,
A Titanic fellow, big I mean, bronzed as iodine,
Do you know him perhaps?
Perhaps, perchance, haply, mayhap, maybe?
Yes, no, nein, ja, oui, si, non?"
"My own name is Schultz. No Sweeney do I know."
"And yet my own husband was German. I am as I
said a widow woman."

In Hamburg an der Elbe
Da schwimmt ein Krokodil.

Now gleam the birches ghost-white wherever they are.
The sacerdotal poplars seem to have taken off their
surplices
Against the heat. What time is it, Nathan?
Quelle heure est-il? Or, is the Big Ben out of order
again?

The perch season is open in eastern West Virginia,
Give me a silver arrow and a bow of polished tin,
Give me a cross-bow out of Thessaly or Irkutsk,
Or an old-fashioned Winchester such as pawnbrokers still use in Erie, Pa., against burglars,
And I will prick their shins in the delicate mine-water,
The dirty perch!
How long, oh, Catiline, will you keep up this pish-posh?

Come, Marie, let us go to the Moscow Art Theatre.
Zhil ya na Tiflise
Bil ya na Kavkase.
Closer, Marie (is not that Mischa Elman going into the shop to buy rosin—
He is a short fellow for his height, don't you think?)
Come closer, and we shall watch the moon rise over Tammany Hall.
The violins begin, let us imagine they are nightingales,
Singing their last, for the world ends tomorrow.
(About this time the fat-legged chorus comes on; do they still say, "So this is Paris"?)
Come, we will stand on the corner of Fourteenth Street and Third Avenue.
The world is falling about us like a whole autumn;
Come close, in the shadow, in the shadow,
The shadow that lengthens and lengthens,
As if we stood under the legs of a Colossus.

My heart is broken, Marie; the moon is red
With blood. And I wonder, I wonder,
Which six of the seven cities that claimed Homer
were liars?
Comment allez-vous? Très bien, Monsieur.

II. A THREE-HANDED GAME OF PINOCHLE

Antiques, Madame? The Modern Antique Company
Has been in business forty-seven years
And never one dissatisfied customer.
Benvenuto! Benvenuto Cellini!
Tarry a moment, it is I, Fra Lippo Lippi,
There are two damsels in the cemetery
Waiting for us under the cypresses;
Let's go together.
Chi troppo sale
Precipitevolissimevolmente.
Flow softly, Wabash, till I end my song!
"Oh, God, how I hate things out of Grand Rapids!"
Have you ever known what it is to hunger for objets
d'art?
This candelabra, *par exemple*, pray
Examine it; observe this little stain—
This little copper stain—well, it was blood.
"Do you remember the Marchesa—
The little fiery woman out of Bologna?
No? Well, we'll say no more about it!"
"Have you ever been lost in the Schwarzwald,
Amalie,

With nothing to eat but those filthy little sausages
They sell in Köln at Schimmel's there on the corner?"

"What was that?"

"I shouldn't be surprised
If dead men tell no tales."
"I think we've been dead a hundred thousand years."

"Yes, and I know that was Little Red Riding Hood
I saw today on Fort Washington Avenue."
Aloha! Aloha!
But the barges spread sail down the river like
peacocks,
Their canopies of orange and azure,
A sailor from Smyrna with a lemon between his
teeth
Fell into the water. O there, Demetrios!
"I think you got a nerve, Mr. Rosenzweig, to ask I
should marry your daughter without a dowry."
In Hongkong I met Kwong Chu,
A mandarin with fingernails a yard long.
He had the most exquisite manners,
And I shall never forget his beautiful angel's smile
When he had us to tea that afternoon in January,
An hour after he had decapitated his mother.
Flow gently, Wabash, till I end my song.
IT'S A QUARTER TO FOUR!
"Is you comin', Andrew Jackson?"

"I ain't sayin' as I ain't."

"I ain't askin' yuh as you ain't; I'se askin' you as
yuh is.
Now is yuh?"
IT'S A QUARTER TO FOUR.

Have you met Nastasia Fillipovna, I said,
And he said he hadn't, so I asked him to.
And that was the beginning. She was one
Of those fierce Russian women, knows no fun.
Hurry up, Johnny, and get your gun.
Well, in a week the man was done for.
IT'S A QUARTER TO FOUR.
For God's sake, will somebody sing Dardanella!
IT'S A QUARTER TO FOUR.
Good-night, ladies,
Good-night, ladies,
Good-night, ladies,
We're going to leave you now.

By the way, I'm sure you know the *Côte d'azur*.
IT'S A QUARTER TO FOUR.
As for me, I never took anything stronger
Than a thimbleful of rum
Even in the good old days,
But you, Mr. O'Brien, say you drink hair-tonic.
Flow softly, Wabash, till I end my song.

I am the same, Panthides,
I, Leotychides, who once in Elymais
Herded black sheep and by Hypanis shore,
Looking on Thebes a thousand leagues away,
Wreathed for your head a crown of eglantine,
And drank a copper keg of home-made wine.

Hula, hula,
Hula, hula,
Old Mother Hubbard she made my bed.
But what good is it
Since Ivan the Terrible
The Brooklyn Bridge
And Staten Island
Fell on my head?

Oh, Carthage, Carthage,
What boots it that the hawthorns keep their snows
Against these many months of wind and sun?
I resolved to take only sarsaparilla,
But what good did that do?
The clerk dished me up a vanilla,
Believing Columbus a Jew.

Take these, *les fleurs mourantes, mademoiselle.*
There's nothing more for me to say,
(Oh, Neptune, Neptune, call your mermaids in!)
Until you get my letter.

But I know
(*Oi, weh is mir, weh is mir!*)
That they've christened
Petrograd
Something or other,
And there's nothing to do
Until somebody
Can find my brother.
The more's the pity,
He's gone, he's gone
In a Spanish galleon
With Henry VIII
To Atlantic City.

La, la,
I've waited in High Bridge,
But I'm going now.

Rome is burning,
Yes, burning,
Gott
im
Himmel,
burning,
burning,
hula, hula,
la, la.

The dead are living
And the living are dead
And there's no use in giving
Your board and your bed
To the sorrowful woman who came
From Lithuania
Latvia
Vienna or Rumania
Rome or Czecho-Slovakia
With an instep and eyebrows of flame.
Waiki, waiki.
What if I have three keys to my apartment
One gold, one silver and one lead
Here in this desert place the frogs are withered
The griffons are no bigger than fleas,
The sands are rocky and the rocks are sandy,
And there's not enough water
And not enough brandy
To wash the ears of King Cole's daughter.
Co co lo co po co.
Oh if there were
Oh if there were
Oh if there were
Do do do do do do
Ra mi fa so.

Let her sit at her piano and play Tschaikowsky,
But we who know how black the sun can be

Yom Kipper Eve or when there is no sun at all
We'll wait in this dead land and see
The Woolworth Building fall.

They will be here presently
And we shall be parched and shrivelled,
Whoever they are we shall be blanched and withered.
We have only to say coo coo
And all will be over.
Even the unicorns stay in their dry holes
The vampires mourn. Wait till the thunder speaks
Dada, goo goo
Abracadabra.
My friend you see me dead and yet I know
I have not long to live
After the purple gnats with bovine faces
After Jerusalem's fallen and Mrs. Grundy
Comes by on a black horse with the three graces.
Gautama's gone, the sacred bull is gone.
Apis is gone
Adio, bella Napoli, adio
Adio
Wait Khiva till the Ganges turns to milk,
You'll hear the tiger laugh with green grimaces
You'll see the thunder lift the Himalayas
As if they were a toothpick.
Da da ma ma pa pa
HALLELUJAH
I'll wait awhile for Julian the Apostate
You go and pick the fallen lightnings up

And see if Mrs. Porter
Has got enough soda water.

Farewell, I've turned the prow to Greece again.
Shall I call up my lawyer, Cortlandt 0004
And say the sea is beautiful tonight.
Brooklyn Bridge is falling down falling down falling
down

Amo amas amat amabo amabimus
Huius huius huius—O mea culpa
There's never anything to say though I should say
The less the more. The blue parrot's fainted.
God bless you all. Paracelsus is drunk again.
Daddy. Damdaddy. Damdaddy

Shanty shanty shanty.

RAG-BAG

Rag-Bag

I

Landscape

Since there is little rain, and since
The days hang dry as leaves in drouth,
I have no words to write that mince,
Or burn like summers in the South.

A hard road and frozen puddles,
A slate evening overlong,
And now and then a bird that muddles
Something born to be a song.

Stubblefields on either hand,
A house, a human figure moving
In all the greyness of the land
Through dull labor and tasteless loving.

This is the landscape of this life;
This is the core you've bitten to;
This is the fruit of fear and strife;
This is the seed from which it grew.

And when you've eaten the apple's meat,
And spat the seed upon the ground,
You'll squat through a little cold and heat
While Silence slowly strangles Sound.

II

Observation

Little by little we subtract
Faith and Fallacy from Fact,
The Illusory from the True,
And starve upon the Residue.

What is the sense in tears or laughter?
The Root of things is what we're after:
But fallen trees will spill their fruit
And worms and darkness keep the root.

Fallen days will spill their sun,
But paper heavens must be won,
And so, while we geometrize,
A bird out-twits us, twice as wise.

Mere matter is not all of marrow;
The harvest leaps not from the harrow,
And a push-button will not light
Joy by day, or stars by night.

III

The Last Religion

Since now the several churches
Have left their sour communicants in
various lurches,
And since Jehovah does not turn a hair
At individual or amalgamated prayer;
Since, nevertheless, the heart demands
More than the fruit of earth, machines or
hands,
Than bread or bed alone,
Let us construct an idol of our own—
Something to cling to when the dead leaves
fall,
To warm the windy air above the sea,
To dull the edges of futility
And sit with in the shadow of the pall.

In the dark field of our despair,
In the long, perplexed, tormented night,
Where there is neither road nor light,
We may hear it moving there,

Dull hoofs on dry grass,
Among the living and bewildered dead;
Then hear it braying like an ass
And be suddenly comforted.

IV

The Shelves of the World

The shelves of the world
Have much to show—
The way of the worm,
The why of snow;

Kings and rivers,
Queens and trees,
Men and gods
And beasts and bees;

Cloven hills,
Uncovered woods,
Plato's thoughts
And Buddha's moods.

And when I've read
Until I'm blind,
And jewels glisten
In my mind,

Their covenant still
The stars will keep
Of silence with
The sullen deep.

And when I've read
For threescore years,
The speech of Sorrow
Will still be tears.

V

Wind, Rain, Fire

Wind, blow the rain about;
Twist and tear the threaded drops;
Night, be dark as disillusioned days!

Within, I spin my thought beside
The salty sea-wood burning green
And creamy, fragrant apple-branches red.

Lash, wind; tumble, rain!
So do the blind and maniac gods
Strike at the puny, human foe below,

Who, for safety and defence,
Builds his fires and spins his thought
By sea-wood burning green and apple red.

Burn, fires, red and green;
Spin, thought, your life and death;
Lash, wind; tumble, rain; strike, gods!

And you, with tempest-bandaged eyes,
Wandering stars and seraphim,
Swim clear, without fear, the brawling sea!

Human eyes and human hands
Beside the burning green and red
See for you and guide you through the night.

VI

Allegory

When one has broken, say thirty acres,
And thirty acres have broken one, too,
And the plow stands cliff-like before the striving,
And endless labor is yet to do:

Acres and acres still to harrow,
Rocks to cut from their flesh of sod,
The very worm that crawls in the furrow,
The broken spirit will call it God;

The worm that crawls in the chain-like furrow,
The night that falls on the hostile sod,

The stars, the stillness, a lamp and linen,
The tired spirit will call it God.

Whatever comes not to bruise and break
him;
Whatever stands not with naked sword:
A worm, a leaf, a light, a window,
The routed spirit will call it Lord.

He will curse the seed, he will hate the
furrow,
And all that springs from the stony sod;
But the twig in the road that gives or takes
not,
The frightened spirit will call it God.

When one has struggled with thirty acres—
A year an acre of bitter clod,
The dark that folds him, the dust that
covers,
The broken spirit will call it God.

VII

The Word

Only one thing knows
The Word that I seek—
A thing wide as the earth is,
Yet a small thing and meek.

It knows more than the stars together,
And a lifetime of flowers,
And the priests drunk by their altars,
And the grey and golden hours.

And many I know have found it,
Found it, and heard
In a great, victorious moment
The Apocalyptic Word;

Have heard the little cat-mouth
Of the yawning grave speak,
And followed the Word forever—
The Word that I seek.

VIII

Consolation

I had a sorrow
That ate away
The heart of night
And the brain of day.

Ah, here was a sorrow
To rid me of!
And I said, "Remember,
The earth is love;

"The world is acid
And hate and steel,
But the earth will reach
Her hand and heal."

So I sat with the hills
Till the sun went down
And the stars came fleeing
From the town.

And when the dark
Was still as stone,
The grief of the hills
Was like my own.

So I took my sorrow
Into a wood
And heard the word
Of the solitude,

And stared at a bush,
And stared at a tree,
Till the eyes walked out
Of the body of me.

And when I saw
Nor bush nor tree,
The sorrow remained
Inside of me.

IX

Proposal

I bring you truce for your desire;
I bring you negativities,
And on a globe, to cool your fire,
The shrivelled continents and hollow seas.

The golden bowl, the silver cord
I bring you as a minatory sign,
And for your strength, a broken sword,
And for your sea-dream, taste of brine.

Would you have more—the bubbles blown
Under the cloud? The rainbow's end?
Let me go on alone, alone:
I asked to be your friend!

X

Hymn

He comes at last into the shade
Where men and women weep;
He gives the lover to his maid,
The shepherd to his sheep.

His presence calms the weeping wild
Of the confusèd throng;
He gives the mother to her child,
The poet to his song.

Peace to the broken heart He brings,
And to the mind repose;
He gives the bird untiring wings,
And summer to the rose.

And though His staff is like a sword,
And like a cloud His breath,
How shall we hail His coming, Lord,
That guise of You called Death?

XI

The Garment

I shall stand before God
In no man's coat,
Nor pluck the praise
From another's throat.

The priests may lock
Their sacristies,
For none of their garments
My taste shall please.

Though broken and halting
Be my strain,
The psalmists shall offer
Their songs in vain.

The robe I shall wear
Myself have wrought
Of the reeds of my life
And the rose of my thought.

Though the monk go gowned
In a richer cloth,
The good Lord's pity
Forgive us both.

XII

Kin

Out of what air flows sorrow?
Out of what fountain tears?
Not of the night or morrow;
Not of the streaming years.

The night is bright and starry;
The heavens utter sleep;
Whence are the winds that carry
Tears for my eyes to weep?

The morning launches merry
Her ship of rose and gold;
Whence are the spirits that carry
Stones for my heart to hold?

They are my sister and brother;
They are my kith and kind;
Out of the womb of my mother
They leaped into my mind.

XIII

Symbol

When you come back to me, belovèd;
When you come back to me,
I, who may walk the wide world over,
Shall only then be free.

When you have bound me fast in fetters,
The fetters of your love,
I shall be free as waves in water,
And birds in air above.

I shall be free as growing trees are,
Whose roots are deep in ground;
That yet have all the air for kingdom,
By Heaven's love unbound.

I shall be free as hills whose bases
In earthy dungeons rest,
Whom Heaven lifts up with lovingkindness
To lean upon her breast.

I, who may walk the wide world over;
Who now am seeming free,
May never leave my heart's deep prison
Until you turn the key:

Until your voice, like Joshua's trumpets,
Sounding my great release,
Blow down my loneliness, my longing,
And I walk forth to peace.

DIALECT POEMS

Dialect Poems

I

Spiritual

I got a complex; you got a complex—
All God's chillun got things.
You are neurotic; I got suppressions;
She's idiotic; *they* owe money—
All God's chillun got things.

Heb'n! Heb'n!
M'yeh, Heb'n!

I got a summons; you got sinus trouble—
All God's chillun got things.
You are a book-keeper; I am worse off;
She *can't* get married; he *got* married—
All God's chillun got things.

Heb'n! Heb'n!
Go tell papa!

II

Mother and Child

(A penetrating study of the psychology of the Younger Generation and its Parents, in the carefully-transcribed idiom of contemporary New York. This may prove a very valuable document. Please hold it.)

Mommer, oo, how bloo I feel!
Wassamatter, baby?
I ain't got no sex appeal,
And never won't have, maybe.

Baby, waddayeh mean yeh ain't?
Now you are on'y six yet;
Wot yeh got is summer complaint,
Wich the doctor will come 'n fix yet.

Mommer, dear, I ain't no heel,
An' you're talkin' like a moron;
I ain't got no sex appeal
An' I wish I never was boron!

Baby, you're a pain in the neck!
An' Mommer, you're another!

Baby, you are full of sec-
S appeal, just like your mother.

Elinor Glyn should meet yeh yet,
An' maybe yeh wouldn't stop 'er!
An' I wish I could say as much, yeh bet,
About yer dear old popper.

If 'e on'y had a little bit,
Yer mommer wouldn't care yet,
But when they was dividin' It
Yer popper wasn't there yet!

Mommer, oo, how good I feel!
Now yer talkin', baby!
Yer mommer sure had sex appeal
An' you have got it, maybe.

HYMN TO SCIENCE

Hymn to Science

Science I sing, the Super-Goddess flute,
Evasive Heaven's constant substitute,
For whom the ductless glands distil a soul,
And molecules their zodiacs unroll;
Whom only Fate and common colds escape;
Who lay with Man and so conceived the ape.
Say at the mention of whose mighty name
The phallic spires first drooped with honest shame,
And at whose wall of integrated facts
The human impulse faltered in its acts!
And though the race continues as before
To ride diseases to the further shore,
Who measured the immeasurable void,
And all its dread of darkness thus alloyed?
Who rescued Eros from his brakes and streams
And made him lord of complexes and dreams?
Who traced Suppression to her tangled lair
And found that Love was only safe when bare?

Immortal Science, Queen and Friend of Man,
Successor to Jehovah and His clan,
Who, with a single blast of frigidaire,
Drove from the world the leprosy of care;
Immortal Science, substituting sense,
Experiment and reason and expense,
For all the hollow shine of dreams and love,
Performed the wonders catalogued above.

Hear then, oh, Maiden, still in rose of youth,
Who found that data were the only truth,
That infinite was finite all in one,
That spots could dare bepox the lordly sun,
And other blessings for our weary days,
Hear then my hail and undiluted praise!
To You, oh, Goddess of Efficiency,
Your happy vassals bend the reverent knee,
Save when arthritis, your benighted foe,
Sulks in the bones and sourly mumbles "No!"
You, only, is my song designed to please,
Though oft the strain is fumbled in a sneeze,
And sneeze succeeding sneeze proclaims, alas!
That Man is still a brother to the ass;
You, only, to whose iron formulae
The patient stars graze tethered in the sky,
Or, waiting till your herdsman Einstein calls,
Stand ringed securely in celestial stalls.

Time was, when in medieval darkness lost,
The frantic race clung to the Holy Ghost,

And brooding in its primitive latrines,
Heard angels singing in its endocrines.
To all the starry host of Heaven they cried,
But had no radio and of course they died:
Each desperate age more wretched than the last—
Some had but poets and of course they passed.
Then You, oh, Science, Super-Muse arose,
And with Promethean pity for our woes,
Stole Saturn's circles from the stormy skies
And placed them neatly under human eyes.
Now loud explosions drown medieval moan;
Men lisp in happy numbers on the 'phone,
And know by name their multitude of germs
Before they yield their bodies to the worms.

Oh, Muse Divine, Hot Mamma of the race,
Whose microscopes can to their secrets trace
All but the whence, the wherefore and the why
Of the immortal foundling of the sky;
Whom only stubborn Destiny evades,
And certain ancient ways of men and maids;
Who rides the whirlwind subway and controls
All animals that lay no claim to souls,
All bugs and beasts of every clime and clan,
Save those that make their habitat in Man,
To whom all earth's phenomena are clear,
Save care, despair, necessity and fear,
Hear then my hail and undiluted praise
For all the other blessings of our days!

A LUBBER LOOKS AT THE SEA

A Lubber Looks at the Sea

I

Cliff

Victorious over 'but' and 'if',
Stands the high, impassive cliff,
As unconcerned with sun or star
As with the bumptious calendar.
The ocean washes every day
A little bit of it away,
And bugs prolific make their home
In its uncouth and tangled dome,
And yet it does not scratch or kick
Or curse the billow or the tick,
Accepting without hope or hurt
The ancient dividends of dirt.
It prods with no complaining mind
The loud and predatory wind,

But hears the dictum of the fates
And placidly disintegrates,
As mindless of Nietzschean balm
As Buddha's over-conscious calm.
It bears the burden of the suns,
Is robbed of slowly-gathered tons,
And swells the unearned increment
Of bandit blasts maleficent—
Yet yields to each his mighty haul
Nor waxes metaphysical,
Nor searches the bewildered sea
For systems of philosophy.
Thus, imperturbable and strong,
No prey to silence or to song,
It baffles with its noble mien
The gods in their perplexed serene,
And juggling neither 'but' nor 'if',
Lives and dies the perfect cliff.

Oh, lyre (I mean the instrument),
Stand by, the while this high intent
I bang upon your bilious strings:
The glory of unquestioning things
I yodel in my febrile fashion;
The mute, immobile lords of passion—
The cliff, the stone, the tree, the sod,
Still hands, that in the lap of God
Lie quietly, while seraphim
And mortals flutter at His whim.

As distant from the hills of joy
As from the glades of *weh* and *oy*,
Midstream in time they stand and are
Bright with the light of every star,
Dark with the dusk of every root
And careless of them all, to boot.
No female of their kind compares
Another's happy lot to theirs,
Or with Icarian wings persuades
Ambition in their neutral shades.
Interdependent, yet alone,
They neither want nor owe nor own,
Nor wonder, while acquiring things,
If planets mumble in their rings,
Nor harry others and themselves
With nonsense from ten thousand shelves,
Whose fecund seed is chiefly sweat,
Whose yield, a heavenly Soviet.

Ah, noble cliff, that gives the sky
An equally Mongolian eye,
By lofty station undismayed,
And of no mystery afraid,
Cast one contemptuous glance on me
Out of your impassivity
Because I hug my 'but' and 'if'
And do not want to be a cliff.

II

Shore

I said, "The sea is lonely, and the sky
Intolerably deep and still and high,
So that the flutter of our upraised hands
Is but a quiver of the wave-worn sands."

I said, "The sun sets always in my mind
And leaves a watch of darkness and of wind
And those unbodied eyes that are the spheres
Upon our dreams, upon our very tears.

"Lay then your near and understanding head
Upon my breast, against the monstrous dead,
For we, the quick, the passing, what have we
In common with the heavens and the sea?"

"How green the sea, how blue the sky!" she said.

I said, "There is laid upon us the weird curse
Of labor with an unborn universe,
And what has our gestation then to do
With ancient green of water or sky-blue?

"Inland upon this island have I seen
The darkness cradle the sun-weary green,
And stars fly low and pin upon the tree
Incongruous fringes of infinity.

"Yet lone the tree stood with its clinging sky,
And lone beneath a wider heaven am I;
For a new chaos cries in us with thirst,
And sea and sky remember but the first.

"For a new chaos cries in us for stars,
And a new order stands beyond the bars,
And ocean mumbling its primordial theme,
Is but the scar of life upon the dream.

"Give me your hand, then; all the rest is old—
The sky is empty and the wave is cold;
The heart has long ago outworn the sea:
Give me your love, and let the sunset be."

"As many worlds as there are eyes," said she.
"Far off the water glooms like dregs of wine,
But here the downs are bathing in the brine.
The moon comes like a lamb upon the sky."

"As many needs as there are hearts," said I.

She said, "The moon is waiting in the sky.
The sea is like a pasture for her mouth.
The dark comes like a shepherd from the south.
The dark climbs like a shepherd north and east.
The foam is like a meadow for her feast.
The downs are waiting for her in the sea.
As many worlds as there are eyes," said she.

"As many worlds as men beneath the sky,
And how shall love bridge all of them?" said I.

"And how may love bridge any of them?" said she,
And saw the sun go down into the sea.

III

Voyage

On the other side of the setting sun
I've seen the ashes of things done
And the sand-bars of Avalon.

Peace was there like a white stone;
Peace you could lay your hands upon
And be healed of the hurt of things won.

On the other side of desire I've seen
Stiller than earth, a still demesne,
And colors better than blue or green.

And death walked on the farthest rim,
Horizon-high and friendly and dim,
And all went to confide in him.

And they walked together, the little and large,
In a soundless air by a strange marge
Where time was moored like a spectre-barge.

And far away on the nearer side
There crept a little wounded tide;
And some remembered and some cried.

For that was the world and all its pain;
And that was living and all its gain;
A little cry in a little rain.

Yes, some remembered and some cried,
For note that none of us there had died,
Though the spear was years-long deep in our side.

By our own graves on the grey strands
We sat and warmed our cold hands—
But the hands that we warmed were living hands.

And therefore, some of us heard the tide
Crawl and cry on the nearer side,
And the hands remembered, and some of us cried.

But peace was there like a blessed stone
To lay the remembering hands upon
And the red stigmata of the sun.

And a great healing came thereof,
Of the ashes under, the sky above,
And closed the wounds of life and love.

Spread your sail and bury your mirth,
Your hope and sorrow and dreams and dearth
And your very love in the tight earth,

And sail to the dark of the setting sun,
To the dunes where all things done and won
Heap the pale sands of Avalon.

For there in the dark of desire I've seen
A grey sweeter than blue or green.

There in the dark of desire I've heard
The soft apocalyptic word.

ENTR'ACTE

Entr'acte

I

Full Fathom Five Thy Father Lies
(Mr. William Shakespeare's Lyric in Mr. Paul Whiteman's Tempo.)

Mamma's kind o' lonely;
Mamma's kind o' sad.
Mamma, where is papa?
Mamma, where is dad?

Papa's gone down in his submarine;
Papa's gone after his mermaid queen;
Papa's turned erratic;
Daddy's gone aquatic;
Papa's all wet from base to bean.
Down in the sea-weed with Davy Jones,
Papa is squandering all his bones
On corals and pearls
And bubbles for the diving girls.

Papa is treading the water some;
Oh, what a fish your dad's become!
I'll tell you on the level,
Your daddy was no devil—
There never was a sweller man
Until he did that Kellerman!
Oh, what a change when he comes home!
Won't he look strange with a beaver full of foam,
And his rich alibis
And his fathom five lies!
Watch your mamma tell him what the sea-nymphs wouldn't tell;
Watch me give him h - e - double - well,
You can bet
He'll get
His funeral knell,
And his ting-a-ling-a-ting-a-ling-a-ding-dong bell!

II

You've Got to See Mamma Every Night or You Can't See Mamma at All

(Mr. John Millington Synge interprets an American theme.)

It's your mamma you'll be looking at seven nights in the week or not looking at at all, and it's yourself will be crying and complaining at the sight of her, and crying and complaining when you'd not

be seeing her at all. And isn't it the hard lot that's fallen on you, what way you must be choosing and you not knowing which way to turn. It's a she-devil she is, I'm thinking, that will not be letting you out one night in the week, and the other mammas so fine to look at it's the very bones in you do be crying for a sight of them.

III

Mr. William Wordsworth Covers a Human Interest Story for a Tabloid Newspaper

—— A simple skirt,
With cocktails on her breath,
Who feels her oats in every limb——
What should she know of death?

I met a little chorus girl,
She was just eighteen, she said;
Her head was thick as many an earl
Who'd clustered round her bed.

She had a town and country air,
And she was barely clad;
Her eyes, you knew, would look so fair
Unto a Pittsburgh lad.

"Husbands and lovers, little maid,
How many may they be?"
"Seven," she answered, unafraid,
And sized up honest me.

"And where are they, I pray you tell."
She answered, "They are seven,
And two of them are gone to Hell,
And two, I think, to Heaven.

"And two of them will never die,
And there is still another,
And in a swell apartment, I
Dwell near him with my mother."

"You say that two are gone to Hell,
And two in Heaven must be;
Yet you are seven—you know damn well,
Sweet wench, you're stringing me."

Then did the little dame reply,
"I tell you they are seven,
And two whose limit was the sky
I hope have gone to Heaven."

"You're stewed, you're stewed, my little maid,
Your voice sounds queer to me;
If four are planted in the shade
Then they are only three."

"Their graves are green and so were they,"
The little jane replied,
"And often with the pearls I play
Which from the boobs I pried.

"These stockings which I now have on,
These pretty rings you see,
The yellow Packard standing yon,
Kind sir, they gave to me.

"And often when I count each bond
And stock, my heart grows sore,
For then my thoughts go out beyond,
And I am sad for more.

"The first that died was Cleveland Jim;
In bed he raving lay,
And when the booze had finished him,
I married Joe that day.

"And after that came Frisco Fred,
Who made his dough in soap;
The next to go was Harvard Ed,
Whose only love was dope.

"Then Mike was in the gravel laid,
In hooch securely soaked."
"How many are they then, sweet maid,
If four of them are croaked?

"If two of them are gone to Hell,
And two, you think, to Heaven,
How many are they, baby?" Well,
She hiccupped and said seven.

IV

Birdie McReynolds

(*Mr. Edgar Lee Masters tells an old, old story.*)

I kept the house on the corner of Linden and Pine-
apple Streets,
Down in the district.
And a lively house it was, too,
For a burg like Fork River.
I liked the business,
And that's why I went in it.
Nobody has to do anything he doesn't want to.
How else could I have stuck it out in that hick
town?
Imagine me a Fork River housewife,
With a Fork River husband,
The kind that used to come down to my house—
Me, Birdie McReynolds!
Don't make me swallow some dirt.
I never lost my virtue.
Don't think it!
I gave it away for a while,

And then I sold it,
And I had a good time both ways.
I knew everybody,
And everybody liked me.
I kept the judge in his place,
The Mayor, the Sheriff, and the Councilmen,
Or the town couldn't have held them.
They needed somebody like me to tone them down,
The poor, swell-headed, small-town fish,
And it's usually a Birdie McReynolds that does it.
I could read a man's character
By the kind of suspenders he wore;
The old sports went in for white silk ones
With "Fireman" or "Policeman" engraved on the buckles.
It made them feel virile,
The poor saps!
Don't think you'll get a sob-story out of me, Eddie Masters;
I wasn't that kind of a jezebel.
There ain't any, anyhow.
It's the good women must weep
While the men work.
We like them to work—
They spend more.
Now go away and let me sleep;
That's one thing I never got enough of
In my business,
Or I wouldn't be here.

V

Miss Edna St. Vincent Millay Goes Wet

I won't get up tomorrow,
Or go to bed tonight,
Unless I know the red wine
Is standing by the white.

Oh, *I* want the red wine,
And *I* want the white,
Or I'll sleep with my clothes on
Until I look a sight.

I want to live in Pilsen,
I want to live in Cork,
I want to live anywhere
Except in New York.

I want to live in Paris,
In Munich or in Rome,
With a mouth full of bubbles
And a chin full of foam.

Oh, *I* want the red wine,
And *I* want the white,
And *I* want the dark beer
And *I* want the light.

Oh, I want to go where drinking
Isn't held a sin;
I want to crush the juniper
Until it is gin.

I'll sail upon the water
Because it isn't dry—
For *I* want the hard stuff,
The Scotch and the rye.

Oh, somewhere east of Suez,
Our best is like their worst,
And it's only a camel
That won't own a thirst.

Oh, to know that I can get it
Whenever I am dry—
The white wine, the red wine,
The Scotch and the rye!

Oh, I could sit a-keening
The rest of the night,
For brandy and sherry
And dark beer and light!

VI

And Mr. Carl Sandburg, Dry

Take away the stuff!
Haul it out o' my sight, dump it into the Chicago
River, clean the streets with it, let the fat-

bellied rich wash down their frogs' legs with it.

I won't traffic with it; it's poison; it drives you crazy; it gives you the D. T.'s and the willies, and I'm not the only one that can prove it—

Not by a damsite; not by a long shot; not by the purple jowls of the brewers and the distillers—God strike 'em dead with their stiff shirts on!

There are ten million wives and widows can prove it; yes, twenty million; thirty million; thirty-seven million, five hundred thousand, in the forty-eight States and some Territories—

And some of the wives have children, and some of the widows have orphans, all legitimate and registered, and entitled to decent treatment, and a fine mess booze has made of them, including those who will grow up to be Presidents of the United States.

Think of them, forty years from now, sitting in the Blue Room of the White House, recalling their rotten childhoods—spoiled and embittered because their fathers came home blind drunk, smelling like a municipal budget, and raised hell and sang drivelling songs, and fell asleep with their clothes on, anywhere from the sink to the ceiling—

What kind of Presidents do you think they'll make?

Go among the Hunkies, the Wops, the Micks, the Californians—the workers and foreigners, who dig the coal and the ditches and furnish the stuff for the Sunday rotogravure supplements—

I except the Kikes, who prefer gambling and women—

And you'll see what John Barleycorn has put over; you'll get your booze-facts straight from the shoulder, so help me God, you will, I'm telling you till I sweat.

And the same holds for native Americans, as hard-drinking a race as ever licked their chops in front of a bar, or in a side-room, or sat down on a curb-stone to wait for the cop or Xmas.

I hate the stuff.

When you say saloon, I see red buffaloes charging along the plains like a bloody hurricane;

I want to pull the hair out of my chest, and brandish it like a torch in the faces of the anti-prohibitionists, the bootleggers, the scofflaws and the big corporations.

Take it out o' my sight; don't tempt me; I wouldn't taste it for the stockyards—all right, I'll take a swig, but it won't change me, mind; I'm agin it!

Cripes! but I'm agin it!

APOSTROPHE TO A FLEA

Apostrophe to a Flea

Nimble and unresting flea,
Do not leap away from me!

Though somewhat different in kind,
We are of a similar mind.

Like yourself, oh, agile flea,
I hop and skip incessantly

From arid here to barren there,
Leaving a zigzag track of air.

Like yourself, I skip and jump
From Life's head to Life's rump,

Scarcely knowing which is which.
I am the flea, the bite, the itch.

Oh, what a destiny we've missed!—
Each a great Industrialist

Leaping with harmonious mind
Upon the earth's immense behind,

The while she sleeps her ancient sleep
And grazes apathetic sheep.

Sometimes in quietness I seem
To hear her scratching in a dream,

With fingers of cool wind and sea,
The bites of multitudinous me—
Her Super-Flea.

Oh, Lesser Insect, you are bound
By lack of Science to the ground,

But we from singing spires shall leap
In aeroplanes upon the deep,

Attack the sylphs who linger there
In the last coverts of the air,

Till they run howling through the blue
And we in roaring swarms pursue.

Oh, Flea, behold us overrun
The purlieus of the shaken sun

And hop and skip and jump and bite
Between the mountains and the light.

The backward aether shall be taught
How sales resistance may be fought,

And mass production shall resound
Tormented leagues above the ground.

The gullies of the moon shall bloom
With a new industrial boom,

And Einstein's void be further bent
To lines of eight and ten per cent.

Oh, what flea-orbits we shall trace
Upon the Universal Face,

While mighty Bankers organize
The vast resources of the skies—

Munition factories in Mars
And tariff rings around the stars.

Oh, nimble and prolific flea,
Lie down and meditate with me
Our slightly different in degree
But common destiny!

THE LOVER OF VERSE

The Lover of Verse

The lover of Verse asks very little—
No bitter knowledge his heart depraves—
He is bound to her even by the brittle
Concatenation of the waves.

Foam to him is her white thighs;
Moonlight is her slender hands;
The blue dark is her wide eyes;
He kisses her feet in the sands.

And she, through all disloyalties
Loyal and virgin to each one,
Walks with him in the deep seas,
Rides with him in the sun.

And they are very happy together—
The mad lover at journey's end,
The beautiful woman who is neither
All a mistress nor all a friend:

The proud queen who loved so many,
To all so false, to each so true;
The wise queen who never gave any
Her gift of giving herself anew.

The lover of Verse is simple-hearted
And like a lamb in his delight,
And when the hunters are departed
He walks with the lion in the night;

Walks and talks and is not lonely,
As are the unbelieving wise:
For the multitudinous stars are only
Her two, yet infinite eyes.

He walks, and is not melancholy;
He talks, and bleeds no thorny fears;
For love has turned his lover's folly
To wisdom wiser than the years.

Oh, lover, now the hour is ready,
Bolt the door while love is whole—
The earth is jealous of your body,
The world of your soul!

SUMMER DAY

Summer Day

Better to savor with a reasonable mind
This meat and drink of leaf and light.
Here is the delicate net of Beauty spread on grass,
Caught in the treetops, baited
With the golden, little fishes of the sun.
Let the feet remember, let the heart recall
How once it stored such brightness as this day's
Under the roof of time,
Under the poplar's curd of wind-churned leaves,
Under the apple and the plum trees in the drowsy,
yellow yard,
Under the feet of darkness.
Let the heart remember how the deciduous days
Withered and fell and made an autumn mound
Upon it. Winter came with gusty candle and a
spade,
Covered the mound with frost and lamentation,
But dug no grave. For the heart's dead

Are never buried, they arise and walk
But do not come to life.
For the heart's dead arise and walk,
Complain in our completions of their state
With brittle sound of frosty cerements,
But will not live again.

Oh, let the heart ensnared, not fall among these dead!

Even now, Autumn, with cupped ear listens to the night-long cricket voices,
Following by the crinkled stars, camping by suns not far away.
Even now, Winter walks after, slowly, with nimbus of pale, polar light,
Dry branch for stave, scrip full of frozen roots,
Gathering wan ends of days for fuel for his crackling stars.

Oh, let the heart ensnared, not fall upon this brightness!

Better walk warily where the trap is spread;
Let the eyes remember, that persuade the soul,
Colors and compositions of delight,
The falling days, the frost, the long darkness mournful,
The dead who walk complaining in our joys.

Oh, let the eyes remember, the ears hear again
Under the mound, under the dusty days that crackle
no more,
Where the burning shards of the broken spears and
helmets of the sun
Lie cooled and rusted in the darkness under the
ferns,
Let the eyes and ears remember, and the heart,
Grasses like this, quickened to fragrance under the
wind's blue horn,
This blown gold winnowed to glassy clearness,
This diminutive sea-music in the leaves,
This quail whistling out of the perfection of his
place,
These glints of the broken spears and helmets of the
sun
Under plumed boughs,
This white horse in the field behind the trees,
With legless motion swimming in the sun above the
green,
Like one of Neptune's horses in the wave,
Flecked and striped with green water,
These white gashes of the wind-blade in the sea's
blue mail,
Flashing crystals of foam on the cobalt sea
Beyond the distant cliff-edge. . . .

Then the day
Changing with delicate desire after the wind's too-
rude embrace;

Changing with delicate thirst, a bowl of yellow air,
gathering raindrops;
Trees yellow in wet glass, meadows and hills
In vitreous yellow shimmering.

These were, became a shape, running and dancing,
with golden, gossamer wingspread;
The heart followed, through the cities and the sorrows, over the downs, to the cliff-edge,
Over the sea, to the wine-red sea-line, through doors
of green and gold,
Studded with bright, new stars . . . out of the world.

Even now, the newly-buried startle up to awful
recognition,
Beginning the last of all their many deaths,
Beginning their everlasting sojourn with the dead,
Stare at the monstrous dark with drooping paws upreared,
Standing in eternal indecision,
The silence dribbling from its shapeless jaws,
And receive the blessing of the apostolic worm. . . .

These too, followed over the sea to the wine-red sea-
line,
Through doors of green and gold studded with
bright new stars . . .
To this place.

Even now, Autumn, with cupped ear listens to the
night-long cricket voices . . .
Winter walks after.

But even before Autumn spreads her household goods
in the trees,
And the pale warriors of the polar sun
Camp in the orchard, grazing their wild horses
Under the pear trees, by the cold, stone fence on the
hill,
The sun will slope to the west, into the frigid
sea,
Sea, slow-moving, like a great, grey turtle, plated
and ridged by wind and cold,
Pitted with desolation like the moon,
Pawing the feet of cliffs;
The massed gulls of the night swoop down upon the
crumbs of light;
The wind stumble and howl in darkness,
Like a primordial beast with fumbling pads
Lost in the new, fixed order of the hills,
Of land and water, day and night;
The heart, too, will slope westward after its knowl-
edge, into the frigid sea,
Pitted with desolation like the moon,
Pawing at rock;
The burning shards of the sun cool in the grass;
The trumpet-flower and the quail be stilled of their
color and their cry,

And a new shape of sorrow and of loss
Stand in the dooryard, translucent, under the sad,
cold stars.

For all that stays
Forever, after the green and golden doors are closed,
And the shape is gone from the cities and the cliffs,
And the darkness gathers the net of Beauty in the
grass,
Is the beast, earth-bound, claws clipped, tail twisted
and forlorn,
Lost in the old, fixed order of the hills,
Forest and field and day and night,
Fumbling his nude, weak cities with lewd and un-
familiar hands,
Crying in quails his own faint, scarce-remembered
cry of place,
Fretting, struggling, feeding, breeding,
Flea-bitten by a soul.

AS THE CROW FLIES, LET HIM FLY—
POEMS CONTAINING MOTTOES FOR WALL
OR DESK, MORAL PRECEPTS, AND OTHER
INSTRUCTIVE AND DIVERTING MATTERS,
SO EXPRESSED, THAT HE WHO RUNS MAY
RUN (IF HE LIKES)

As the Crow Flies, Let Him Fly—Poems Containing Mottoes for Wall or Desk, Moral Precepts, and Other Instructive and Diverting Matters, So Expressed, That He Who Runs May Run (If He Likes)

I

She walks in beauty, like the night,
And so she should, the parasite!

II

The cat sits;
The bat flits—
The nit-wits!

III

The camel isn't very bright,
In spite of his amazing height,

And so obeys the greater guile
Of creatures he could kick a mile.

IV

Behold the High Official, he
Is gazing at the Treasury.
He wears an inward-looking smile,
His cheerful face is full of guile;
He loves the people and their cause,
Their shining faces and applause.
He'd die for dear Democracy,
And lives but for the Treasury.

V

Sing a song of sixpence,
And sing it till you die;
And this I'll bet, you'll never get
A pocketful of rye.

VI

To an Altered Cat

Unaware of sun or moon,
Indifferent to bane or boon,
He stares at nothingness, content
Without his feline complement.

No passion animates his pose;
No memories his eyes disclose;
The loveliest female of his kind
Leaves not a shadow on his mind.

He takes his liver and his beef,
As we the glory and the grief;
Then, having eaten, he surveys
Our gloomy struggle with the days.

Ah, more serene than carven stone,
Victorious over mirth and moan,
He lolls upon the couch, to wait
The dust for which we war with fate.

Ah, you who pity Thomas, say,
Do you, like him, possess your day?
He tempers to the shears the wind,
Who alters to his doom his mind.

VII

Fools may go
Where angels wouldn't;
But then, we know,
The angels couldn't;
If angels could, I think they'd try
A little folly on the fly.

VIII

If you're a naughty little girl,
The least you'll get will be an earl;
Sin must prosper, or it's bored,
While virtue is its own reward.

IX

I understand that God is not
Confined to any sphere or spot,
But roams, in this or that disguise,
Through Paris, as through Paradise.
He's here and there and everywhere,
Above, below, and in the air,
And may with certainty be found,
The prophets tell us, on the ground.
I do not doubt that this is so:
I take the word of those who know,
And yet, I sometimes wonder why
The steeples point Him in the sky,
And not a single church makes clear
That He may be as often here.

X

I envy things of wood or stone
Beyond the reach of mirth and moan,
That neither greed nor grief nor sex
Nor Jove nor Juno's self can vex.

They lose their hour of jazz, 'tis true,
A joke, a love affair or two,
But on the other hand they miss
What counter-irritants of bliss!
Often would I myself deny
My three-inch sight of city sky,
The junk that clutters up my mind,
The dubious comfort of my kind,
The surreptitious beer and gin
And all the sour fruit of sin,
If I could only sit and stare
Like silly pictures on the air.
How much we pay to say, "*Je suis*,"
"*Ich bin*," or "*Sum*," or even "*Me*"!

XI

A bird in the hand may sometimes be
Worth a couple in a tree;
That depends upon the kind
Of bird you caught and had in mind.
A lark in air is worth, I think,
Twenty sparrows in a sink,
And I should rather see birds fly
Than find them singing in a pie.

XII

Fish have scales but cannot sing
Or play the flute or anything,

While never yet the goat was born
That blew a tune upon his horn.
If I were made like fish or goats,
You may be sure I'd meet my notes.

XIII

Well may he be to censure blind,
Who is found charming by his kind.

XIV

The early bird may catch the worm;
I do not care for foods that squirm;
I'll wait till noon to make my rounds,
And catch some coffee off the grounds.

XV

I'm not a huntsman bold and brave;
I'd surely run my skin to save;
If I encountered bull or bear,
I'd lose, if not my pants, my hair;
A tiger burning fairly bright
Would kill me seven times with fright.
Faint hearts as palpitant as mine,
Must battle with the dandelion.

XVI

It took much longer than a day
To build a town like Rome, they say;
Yet now, the mightiest thing in Rome
Is Mussolini's storied dome:
It's not how long it took, but how
It took at all, that milks the cow.

XVII

The lion roars, the echoes try
To simulate that lordly cry;
But having said their little say,
The echoes quickly fade away.

PASS, OH, TIME

Pass, Oh, Time

Pass, oh, Time (oh, Passing Medicinal)
Pass in the rustling of trees,
in the clarity of this light,
over the crystal, smooth floor of the sun,
over the golden grass.
As dew in the night to the leaf,
as rain to the seed
is your going unto me.
Oh, Passing Medicinal,
oh, apple ripened in the fragrant wood,
oh, Song Completed, Life Resolved,
Pain ripened, withered, fallen into dust,
Desire shored, as the breakers are shored
and at rest in the sand
that quenches the bite of the salt in their
throats,
under the aegis of your viewless wings
I walk through the whirlwind,

I walk through my doom.
In the tent of your wing-spread I wait,
till the clash of the sabres is stilled,
and riders and horses thin out
into air, as a vapor, a dream,
and the tent and the desert and fear
together dissolve into darkness.

And even these who labor in the sun,
hewing down trees in the orchard,
unmindful of you,
shall meet you with arms full of branches,
lie down in silence sweeter than their leaves,
in fragrance of all flowers that ever grew,
in orchards blowing with the branchèd stars.

SONGS OUT OF AN EARLIER TIME

Songs Out of an Earlier Time

I

Moonlight in the Street

It lies like tired, spent lightning, that has fallen
asleep on the ground;
It melts the cold dark into music, into music that
breathes not a sound;
It sheets the dead trees in splendor, with motherly
fingers and kind,
And it eases soft as a carpet, the stinging feet of
the wind.

It is Beauty reft of its passion; it is Pathos
cleansed of its pain;
It is spun of the veins of lilies, and of sun-threads
sunken in rain;

It is born of the Darkness praying, with a Dawn-light on her face,
And the Ultimate Pity has sent it, a grace of Her Grace.

II

Rest from Desire

The years shall bring us rest
From wind and fire;
But sweetest still and best,
Rest from desire.

For Sorrow trudges by,
And tears are dry
In the light o' the sun;
But the heart's unwearied spinning
Is never, never done,
From Life's strange, sad beginning,
Till the grave is won.

We shall rest in the silent sea
From storm and wind and fire;
But the sweetest rest shall be
Rest from desire.

III

Crêpe on the Door

The dead they sleep a long, long sleep;
The dead they rest, and their rest is deep;
The dead have peace, but the living weep.

The moonlight sleeps like a silver lake . . .
The dead they know nor pain nor ache;
The living watch, and their hearts they break.

The night stands mute at the shuttered pane . . .
The dead shall need no prayers again,
But the living cry unto God in vain.

The wind goes by with a weary moan . . .
The dead lie stark and still as stone,
But the hearts of the living cry for their own.

The candles gleam where the pale dead sleep . . .
The dead they rest, and their rest is deep;
The dead have peace, but the living weep.

The dead they sleep—and soft is their bed.
Oh, why do the living weep for the dead?
And why not weep for themselves instead?

IV

Memorial

My mother walked where I walked;
She held me by the hand;
But her eyes were walking elsewhere
In a sad, blue land.

Plums fell in the stillness;
Leaves grieved in the wind;
But another day was shining
In my mother's mind.

The summer lay in the garden
And suckled the breasts o' the sun;
But my mother had forgotten
That other summers were done.

Alien in the garden,
Exile under the sun,
My mother had forgotten
That her youth was done.

My mother and I walked slowly;
She held me by the hand;
But I heard the leaves in the garden,
And she in another land.

I heard the leaves in the garden
Grieve in the summer wind;
But the sorrow that grew in Zion
Grieved in my mother's mind.

The plums dropped beside her;
My mother did not start;
For the shadow that rose in Russia
Sighed in my mother's heart.

The sorrow that grew in Zion,
My mother under the tree,
And the shadow that rose in Russia
Sighed like the severing sea—

The sea, whose arm is mighty;
The sea, whose wrath is blind,
That scatters the sons of Israel
Like leaves upon the wind—

That scatters the sons of Israel
Until His Will is done,
Alien in their gardens,
Exiles under the sun.

The eyes that look on sorrow
Look not upon the sun:
My mother had forgotten
That her youth was done.

Leaves fell in the garden
And brushed my mother's face;
But my mother walked with her mother
In a distant time and place.

My mother stood where I stood,
And held me by the hand;
But I knew my mother was little
In another land.

V

Out of Your Littleness

Out of your littleness, out of your slightness,
A world I shape me, sturdy and strong;
Out of your stillness, out of your whiteness,
Radiance and song.

I need no opiate out of the heavens,
Nor wine of the vine of the valley or steep;
You are my nectar and nepenthe,
Battle and sleep.

I need not follow the great clouds sailing
Swan-wise to the Hesperides;
Or sun or moon, that renew their failing
Strength in the seas.

You are the fruit of the golden garden;
You are the silver swans in the skies;
I am renewed with the love that rises
Out of your eyes.

Like tired birds, my sorrows flutter
Out of the east and out of the west;
Descend and find, my love, what utter
Peace on your breast!

VI

Admonition

Hear you, all you celibate,
Who take Heaven for a mate,
Has no warning from above
Told you Death can also love?

Loving you, he'll draw his sword
And fight for you against your Lord,
Slay Him in some graveyard gloom
And wed you in his narrow room.

VII

When I Was Little

When I was little I used to sit
In the kitchen by the stove;
Like candle-shades my thoughts would flit,
Nor from those four walls ever rove.

Blue and red the tumbled coals
Made a witches' wood of fire;
The wind with league-long fingers struck
Anger from his iron lyre.

Winter huddled like a beast
Round the house in icy fur,
As he waited for a feast
On the first that dared to stir.

Through the window I saw the stars,
Frozen orphans of the skies,
Watery with pain of cold
As if they were poor human eyes.

And behind, I seemed to see
God in regnant posture tense,
Buttoned snugly to His beard
In His own magnificence.

Lord of all the prophets He,
To the pious visible,
Holding Moses on His knee,
Looking down on Israel.

Patriarch of Patriarchs,
Only friend of Israel,
Gazing on this very room;
For my mother knew Him well.

Silently my mother went
Through the kitchen, by the stove,
Heaping warm against the dawn
Little services of love.

Singing half and sighing half,
What she did I never knew,
For the served are unaware
What the servant finds to do.

From Lithuania my mother came,
Half a mother, half a child;
The long and bitter sea that brought,
Sweetly home her heart beguiled.

Sweet and sad her heart beguiled;
The mother toiled; the maiden yearned—
Her face was like a shaded lamp
That softly screened the soul that burned.

Sitting wistful by the stove,
I felt her dream uneasily;
I saw her mother in the coals
Wave her heart away to sea.

My mother's heart did weep in mine;
We were two children in my breast;
My sorrow took my mother's shape
And soothed me tenderly to rest.

So by my sorrow comforted,
Nodding in the candle-light,
I followed it upstairs to bed
And left my mother to the night.

VIII

Sing, Wind of Summer!

Sing, wind of summer, through the leaves;
You are not all that grieves,
Seeking some golden thing that has no name
In your melodious winging
Beneath the cloudy moon,
I hear my own heart singing
As sad, as lorn a tune,

Pursuing vain, like you, some trackless flame,
Forever wandering,
Of love, of joy, of fame.
Sing, wind of summer, sing!
Sing!

IX

Remonstrance

Let the tears be dry in your eyes, and the cloud melt
on your brow;
The dead were crying once as you are crying now;
They were crying in the deserts; they were crying
by the streams;
They cried out in their waking, and they cried aloud
in their dreams;
The cities were full of their clamor; the walls
leaned over their moan—
Can you hear so much as a sigh now, under the
heavy stone?

There will be maidens like you and young men
younger than I;
They will watch the fiery shoots of the spring spread
over the sky;
They will sing their songs to each other; they will
kiss and deceive;
They will be crying, too, for all living things must
grieve;

And we shall seem as foolish to them finding a reason
for tears,
As they seem foolish to us now, who are dead a
thousand years.

There was a young girl like you once, in Carthage
or Tyre or Troy,
Who wept through her hair till midnight because of
a roving boy;
There was a young man like me once, in Egypt or
Rome or Greece,
Who hunted an ancient heartache, and called it the
golden fleece:
Is there any could now imagine the greatness and
gulf of their grief?
Would you smile if you looked for their story under
that fallen leaf?

Time is a drunken High-Priest, to whom it is sin to
weep;
He tramples the grief of Jacob along with his sire's
sheep;
The things of dust are his hunger; the tears of men
are his thirst;
Let him go parched for the second; let him take
grass for the first.
So dry the spring in your eyes then, and drive the
cloud from your brow,
And laugh as you look for your story a hundred
years from now.

X

Words

Under my words securely lie
How many passions born to die,
How many moments poised for flight
Upon a ledge of day or night.

And yet the work was not amiss,
Was not in vain, in spite of this.
(I aimed at no Acropolis.)

For in the striving, lo, I found
Silence with a starry sound,
A green tree in a singing wood,
A happy host in solitude,
Jesus jesting merrily
With a lad in Galilee,
Who, therefore, through his life's whole span
Loved the Saviour for the Man.

And in the striving, lo, I heard
A new moon warbling like a bird,
A new moon laughing like a child
Because it was by space beguiled.

And in the striving, lo, I saw
Love break the brutal sword of Law.

Still from sky-roof and strange sea-floor
The everlasting spirits cry
For men to live before they die.

And still a million hearts reply,
And pound upon the granite door
With love and drink and dreams and fears
And desperate anger of the years.

And some there are who even try
Above the mountainous wall to fly,
Like foolish birds
With little, broken wings of words.

APOLOGIA

Apologia

Though I made songs clear as green-housed birds,
Or bells going their Sabbath round,
Or the wind driving the silver nails
Of summer rain into the ground;

Though I made songs as high and shining
As stars fleeing their storm-barred jails,
Or the moon shaking her dripping horns
After the charge of the tempest fails;

Though I made songs as strange and witch-like
As cloud-ships sailing leisurely
The burning inlets of the sundown
With cargoes from the crimson sea;

Though I made songs as wise and placid
As the look in a dead man's face,
Where the still flood of the fatal lightning
Lies like a dawn in a desert place;

Greater than all my songs am I;
Much more have seen, have heard much more—
For who shall fetch in a pitcher of singing
All that lies on the ocean-floor?

Who shall fetch in a cruse of verses
All that lies on the mind's sea-floor,
Or lift on the point of a sword of song
All that lies at the heart's deep core?

Though the pitcher be cunningly carven as hope,
Though the sword be sharp as the blade of truth—
Holds Death a half of a life-time of dying?
Holds Life a tenth of the thoughts of youth?

Though I made songs lovely as love surrendered,
Though I made songs wise as an empty skull,
The fields of the mind must rot with harvest,
The sea of the heart be ever full.

THE END